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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Wednesday, January 11, 1939

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "MAPLE NEWS." Information from the Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture. Publication offered: "The Production of Maple Sirup and Sugar," Farmers' Bulletin NO. 1366.

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Sugaring-off season in New England won't be quite the same this spring that it has been for so many years--won't be the same in our lifetime probably. And the reason is the hurricane which hit New England in September. That was a sad day not only for the fine old New England oaks and elms and spruces but also for many of the sugar maple trees.

Department of Agriculture foresters have recently announced their estimates of the maple loss. They say that millions of the trees that supplied the Nation with sugar and sirup have been damaged. In Vermont, the State which produced nearly twice as much sugar and sirup as any other, about a third of the 5 million maples are down. Although New Hampshire had fewer sugar maples than Vermont, its loss is greater. From half to three quarters of the New Hampshire maples were blown down.

Foresters estimate that it will be nearly a hundred years before new plantings can reach the size of some of the magnificent trees destroyed. A hard maple should be at least 35 to 40 years old before it is tapped for sap.

Vermont farmers have been receiving a yearly total of about 2 million 325 thousand dollars for their sugar crop. Hurricane damage will take about 700 thousand dollars from this yearly income.

Fortunately, there are possibilities of salvage for the down maple trees because hard maple is used so widely in manufacturing furniture. However, more than 115 million feet are down in Vermont alone. This is about 6 times the amount that Vermont farmers sell each year.

In spite of the heavy loss of maples in New England, the foresters believe that the country as a whole will produce about as much sugar and sirup as before. That's cheering news for everyone who likes these all-American sweets--everyone, that is, except the New England farmers who have lost maple trees. Some 23 States produce maple sugar and sirup. The business is profitable only in the North where the gradual spring brings a continuous and plentiful flow of sap over a period of weeks. In more southern States like Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina sugar-making is only possible up in the mountains where the altitude makes the spring much like that up North. Some of the States outside of New England which produce the most maple sugar are: New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Maryland and West Virginia.

By the way, any of you listeners interested in planting new maple groves are welcome to the Department of Agriculture bulletin called "Production of Maple Sirup

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and Sugar." It is Farmers' Bulletin No. 1366. Just write to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. and ask for "The Production of Maple Sirup and Sugar," No. 1366. It's free for the asking while the supply lasts.

Did you notice that I spoke of maple sirup and sugar as "all-American sweets"? Do you know why? Because the United States and Canada are the only countries where these products are made. The earliest explorers to this country found the Indians making sugar from the sap of maple trees, and in some sections, especially up along the St. Lawrence River, they were producing it in quantity for trade. For many years the early settlers of the northern part of this country and even in Kentucky and Virginia had no sugar but maple sugar.

People often ask whether other varieties of maples found in other places don't have sugar in their sap. The answer is: Yes, all maples have sweet sap but only a few species have enough to produce sugar or sirup in paying quantities. The sugar maple and the black maple are the only varieties used for the purpose. The red maple, the silver maple, the Oregon maple and the box elder--all members of the same family, give so little sap that they aren't useful for making sugar. The black maple has the reputation of being superior to all others as a producer of sap. How far this is true is uncertain. The black maple is very much like the sugar maple except that it seems to prefer lower land such as the banks of streams or rich valleys made by rivers. The black maple grows in Vermont, on the shores of lake Champlain and southward west of the Allegheny Mountains from Minnesota to Arkansas and eastern Kansas.

You may be interested to know that the amount of sap a maple yields depends on how large its crown is--that is, how many leaves it has. Many sugar-makers believe that sugar trees in a forest produce more sap than those in a grove. The foresters say that this is because the forest floor with its covering of litter and humus keeps the ground damp and rich, so the trees are stronger. The sugar maple is a tree that does well in shade. Even the young seedlings can stand the shade of a complete forest cover.

Perhaps you'd like to know how much sugar or sirup a tree yields in a season. The foresters say anywhere from 5 to 40 gallons of sap, or an average of from 10 to 20 gallons, is the yield. This boils down to an average of 3 pounds of sugar or 3 pints of sirup. Often it takes as much as 50 gallons of sap to make 1 gallon of sirup. Perhaps you know that the first run of sap is generally richer in sugar so yields more sirup.

That's just a start on the interesting facts about the maple tree and its sweet products. You'll find further information in the maple sugar bulletin I mentioned a moment ago. Once more, this is Farmers' Bulletin No. 1366 called "The Production of Maple Sirup and Sugar." Write for it to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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